DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 275 467 RC 015 948

AUTHOR Flanagan, Kathleen R.; Trueblood, Cecil R.
TITLE Designing Effective Rural School Staff Development Programs.
PUB DATE Oct 86
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the National Rural Education Association Conference (78th, Little Rock, AR, October 8-12, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrators; College Faculty; *College School Cooperation; Cooperative Programs; Elementary Secondary Education; *Faculty Development; Higher Education; Individual Development; *Inservice Teacher Education; Principals; *Program Design; Program Effectiveness; *Program Implementation; *Rural Education; Rural Schools; School Districts; Teacher Characteristics; Teacher Role; Teamwork
IDENTIFIERS Keystone Central School District PA; Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

Based on research studies of effective staff development and rural education, the Inservice Leadership Team (ILT) was designed to identify key teachers in school buildings, team them with principals and central office staff, and train the team to design, deliver, and evaluate staff development at the school level. Rural Pennsylvania school staff, district administrators, and Pennsylvania State University faculty collaborated on the project. Team members received training over a 6 month period in competencies such as goal setting, needs assessment, and change process. Rural school faculty was divided into staff development teams of six to eight teachers with an ILT member serving as advisor and guiding each faculty member through development of a personal/professional growth plan for the school year. Once teachers selected their inservice education topics, learning resource teams were formed by those teachers with common professional growth goals. Program evaluations indicated that 85% of the teachers implemented a new practice in their classrooms within 12 months of initiation of the ILT model of staff development. In addition, teachers' attitudes toward inservice education became more positive, relations between the school and the central office improved, and a high level of trust developed among rural teachers, administrators, and university faculty. (JHZ)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED275467

DESIGNING EFFECTIVE RURAL SCHOOL STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

by

Kathleen R. Flanagan
215 Bixler Hall
Ashland College
Ashland, OH 44805
419-289-4142

and

Cecil R. Trueblood
150 Chambers Building
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802
814-865-1807

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Kathleen R. Flanagan

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

RC015948

A paper presented at the National Rural Education Conference, Little Rock, Arkansas
October, 1986

Introduction

Public school systems are constantly challenged to deal with change dictated by the needs of society, the needs of the individual, and the needs of the disciplines. Educational reform, or school improvement, are catchall phrases used to describe the impersonal objects of change. Despite Goodlad's (1975) early contention that the school is the unit of change, the actual site of any change is the individual classroom, and the primary object of change, as well as the agent of change, is the individual classroom teacher. Put succinctly, schools don't change--individuals do.

Fullan (1982) supports this assertion. He stated in his review of the literature of educational change, that change has meaning at the level of the individual.

> Real change, whether desired or not, whether imposed or voluntarily pursued, represents a serious personal and collective experience characterized by ambivalence and uncertainty, and if the change works out it can result in a sense of mastery, accomplishment, and professional growth. The anxieties of uncertainty and the joys of mastery are central to the subjective meaning of educational change, and to success or failure--facts which have not been recognized or appreciated in most attempts at reform. (p. 26)

Staff development programs represent a formal attempt to help individual teachers grow and develop throughout their professional careers. The type of change required for "school improvement" is change in the behaviors and attitudes of individual teachers. Such change is at once multifaceted, personal, and threatening to the individual.

Purpose

What factors contribute to the effectiveness of staff development programs? Are there unique characteristics found among rural teachers or within the rural school settings which impinge upon these known factors? This paper briefly identifies selected factors which contribute to success or failure of staff development, as well as characteristics of rural teachers and their views about change. The primary purpose of this paper is to describe one approach to staff development which is based upon these known factors and characteristics.

Research on Inservice Education

In an analysis of research on inservice education, Lawrence, Baker, Hansen, and Elzie (1974) found that "successful" programs involved teachers in the initiation, planning, and delivery of inservice activities, and emphasized self-directed professional responsibility . Fullan (1982) related failure of inservice programs to selection of topics by external agents rather than classroom teachers, as well as a general failure to address the individual concerns and needs of teachers. In examining factors influencing local inservice programming, Barnette (1980) reported negative effects resulting from a variety of elements, such as lack of teacher involvement, unclear or unfocused inservice goals, lack of recognized, consistent need for inservice, and physical distance between information/service providers and information/service receivers.

Staff Development in a Rural Setting

Although the need for staff development appears in all sectors of education, the rural school milieu has some unique characteristics which make it a strong candidate for the establishment of professional development programs for inservice

educators. The population stability of rural communities contributes to a very low turnover rate in the teaching staff. The tendency for local citizens to remain in their home community further enhances this stability, thus contributing to an inbred quality of thinking. These characteristics all tend to inhibit the sense of risk taking necessary to foster educational innovation and change in rural schools. Rural communities are not noted for openness to the contributions of perceived "outsiders." Consequently, any new teachers or administrators who enter a rural setting must serve a prolonged probationary period before their new ideas are accepted or adapted. Given the constraints for professional growth produced by these characteristics and factors, a strong program for continuous professional self-renewal seems urgently necessary for the improvement of education in rural settings.

Little research has been done on the needs of rural teachers (Edington, 1976; Parks & Sher, 1979; Sher, 1977; Sher & Rosenfeld, 1977). The Keystone Central school District/Penn State Teachers Corps Project (1979) and the work by Lortie (1975) and Fullan (1982) provide some evidence to show that rural teachers tend to:

1) Be highly individualistic and thus see their problems as being unique

2) Prefer to work on staff development projects which they can work on alone

3) Be wary of evaluation from "outsiders"

4) Stay in one school district during their entire career

5) Prefer to get help from a few "trusted" fellow teachers

6) Prefer psychic rewards, respect from peers and time to work on their perceived needs during staff development time

7) Have a high sense of pride in their school

8) See change as a personal rather than group-based experience

9) Use practical criteria to assess the changes they are asked to make

10) Be isolated from institutions of higher education and thus do not pursue graduate study.

Developing Inservice Leadership Teams at the Building Level

The Inservice Leadership Team (ILT) Model is one attempt to build upon the research from staff development and rural education. In essence, this model focuses upon identifying key teachers in a school building, teaming them with building administrators and central office staff, and training the team to design, deliver, and evaluate staff development within the school.

Under the aegis of the National Teacher Corps Project, the Keystone Central School District, The Pennsylvania State University, and the community of Renovo, PA entered into a collaborative partnership to design a long-range staff development program. In the initial stages of the program, leadership was provided by central office administrators and university faculty. Using the "Sensing Interview" technique (see appendix) this leadership group conducted a series of one-to-one interviews with each of the sixty teachers involved in the project. As a part of that interview, teachers were asked to nominate key peers to serve on the Inservice Leadership Team (ILT). The nominated teachers were then asked to volunteer to serve. At the same time, the superintendent nominated central office representatives, who joined key teachers and the building administrator in the second stage of the project, ILT Training.

Inservice Leadership Team Competency clusters included:

1) Goal setting
2) Needs assessment
3) Planning
4) Program implementing/monitoring
5) Evaluation
6) Team building/group dynamics
7) Obtaining/maintaining political and resource support
8) Adult growth and development
9) Leadership styles/skills
10) Change process

Training was provided across a six-month period. In addition to the competencies listed above, each ILT member was encouraged to identify and develop an area of personal expertise related to a known inservice education need in the school.

In the fall of the second year of the project, the faculty was divided into small staff development advisory teams. One ILT member served as a staff development advisor to 6-8 teachers. In the advisory groups, each faculty member was guided through the development of a personal/professional growth plan for the school year (see appendix). Inservice plans for the year (agreed upon by the total faculty) were examined, and each teacher was advised of the additional option of designing an individualized inservice plan (see appendix). Throughout the year, advisory groups met to monitor progress of the program. At the end of the year, ILT members conducted individual interviews with each teacher to assess progress on the initial professional growth plan (see appendix).

Once teachers selected their inservice education topics for the year, learning resource teams were formed by those teachers with common professional growth goals. Support services were provided through the guidelines of the ILT and university faculty.

The ILT monitored and adjusted the staff development program throughout the year.

Was the program successful? ILT and university faculty program evluations indicated that 85% of the teachers implemented a new product or practice in their classroom within 12 months of the initiation of the ILT model of staff development. In addition, teachers' attitudes toward inservice education became more positive, relations between the school and the central office improved, and a high level of trust developed among rural teacher's, administrators, and university faculty.

University/School District Staff Development: A Collaborative Effort

Collaboration is defined by Young, Bonney, and White (1980) as a relationship of mutual trust between groups who decide to work toward common goals. In its most practical form, collaboration for our project means selected rural teachers, principals, central office administrators and university faculty using consensus-type decision making to work together toward two goals: first, providing services and resources to improve university and school programs, and second, providing feedback to each other that helps the individuals involved in the project to improve in performance of their primary roles. Figure 1 summarizes the collaborative model used by the project, and the role groups participating in a collaborative relationship. Mutual trust, the first dimension of the model, is the human relationship aspect of collaboration. It represents how the three groups in the project work together using consensus as a decision making process. Service/Resources, the second dimension, focuses upon the skills and resources that can be made available to help each role group carry out its primary function. The third dimension is the common goal, school improvement through staff development. The key understanding here is that appropriate staff development activities will improve both school and university programs as well as each participant's ability to perform his/her primary administrative and/or teaching function.

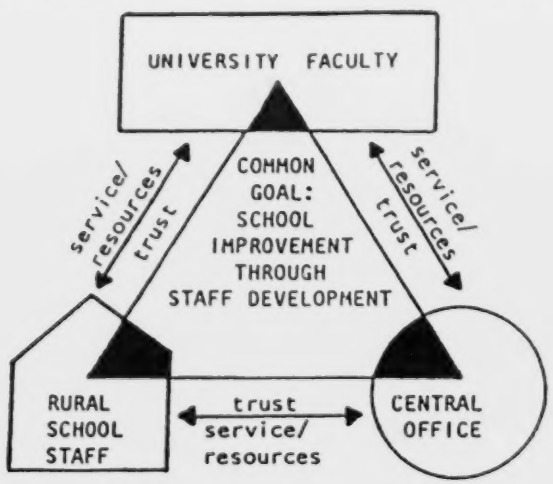

Figure 1. ***A Model for University, School Staff and Central Office Collaboration***

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Where is the initiative for staff development in rural schools? Institutions of higher education, with emphasis on preparing teachers for rural settings, might appropriately begin staff development efforts in collaboration with key leaders in school districts. What form might such a collaborative effort take? The research on change in rural schools shows a building-based staff development leadership team should be the working core for the collaborative effort at each school site. A leadership team is composed of key teachers identified by their peers, the building principal, a central office administrator and selected university faculty. The composition of this team, which comes from three district role groups, is crucial to establishing mutual trust, open communication and ownership of the school's staff development goals.

Goodlad (1978) demonstrated that the individual school, with its principal, teachers and students should be the center of the educational enterprise, and therefore is the most effective unit for fostering change in shcool programs. Within the individual school the change agent role should be played by an internal leadership team, as opposed to the common trend to use external change agents for leading school improvement. The drive for internal focus of control seems particularly strong in isolated rural school sites, and we have found that this characteristic enhances the effectiveness and acceptance of the local leadership team's efforts.

The major role for universities and colleges in the collaborative process is providing leadership training, technical expertise in evaluation, and content resources for staff development activities. In return, benefits to the university are faculty contact with the everyday realities of rural education, a laboratory for action research and preservice field experiences, and a potential source of graduate students.

Nelson and Trueblood (1984) found that both inservice workshops and formal university courses can be offered on-site and that such offerings encourage rural teachers to obtain a master's degree. In fact in Keystone Central School District where such a model was implemented, 15 teachers or about 25% of the staff completed their master's degree over three years. Trueblood and Nelson recommend that:

1) Graduate courses must be a more practical focus and should take advantage of the field setting by tying class work directly to school teaching.

2) Graduate courses should be taught directly after school one day a week.

3) Most work with rural schools is on a personalized, individualized basis.

4) There are clearly difficulties with library materials, media resources and the natural conservation of local staffs.

References

Barnette, J. J. Contentual and process factors influencing local inservice programming. Paper presented at American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Boston, 1980.

Edington, E. D. Strengthening the small rural school. Austin, TX: National Educational Laboratory, 1976. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 115-408).

Fullan, M. The meaning of educational change. Toronto, Ontario: OISE Press, 1982.

Goodlad, J. I. The dynamics of educational change. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975.

Goodlad, J. I. Educational leadership: Toward the third era. Educational Leadership, 1978, 35, 322-331.

The Keystone Central School District/Penn State Teacher Corps Project. Teacher Corps Program '79, Washington, DC: U.S.O.E., No. G007900253, 1979.

Lawrence, G., Baker, D., Hansen, B., & Elzie, P. Patterns of effective inservice education. Tallahassee: Florida Department of Education, 1974. (Available from PAEC, Post Office Drawer 190, Chipley, Florida 32428.)

Lortie, D. Schoolteacher: A sociological study. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.

Nelson, Murry R. and Trueblood, Cecil R. Field-based delivery system for rural teachers. The Rural Educator, 1984, 6 (1), 9-11.

Parks, G. A., & Sher, J. P. Imaginary gardens? Real problems. Austin, TX: National Educational Laboratory, 1979. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 167 138).

Sher, J. P. What's next? A research and action agenda for rural education. In J. P. Sher (ed.), Education in rural America: Reassessment of conventional wisdom. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 148 547).

Sher, J. P. & Rosenfeld, S. Public education in sparsely populated areas of the United States. Washington, DC: National institute of Education 1977, p. 4.

Young, K., Bonney, N., & White, M. A model for creating collaboration through community based education. Athens, GA: Southeastern RCTR Center, Teacher Corps, University of Georgia, 1980.

APPENDIX

THE SENSING INTERVIEW *

OBJECTIVES

-to generate data (supplement and expand data from surveys and observations)
-to clarify data that is generated
-to increase ownership of the diagnosis or assessment

ADVANTAGES

-understanding
-amplification
-checking assumptions
-discovery
-supplementation
-language
-credibility
-contact
-sharing
-openness
-rapport
-defusing

DISADVANTAGES

-expense
-goals
-comparability
-data reduction
-threat
-accessibility

SETTING

-one-to-one or group
-private, comfortable setting - no interruptions
-voluntariness
-limits of confidentiality need to be explained

CONTENT AND PROCESS

-content will vary due to the purpose of the interview
-begin with questions that pose little threat
-move to more sensitive areas later in the session
-explore questions rather than just ask

INTERVIEWER VERBAL TECHNIQUE

-probing
-understanding
-supporting

SEQUENCE

-preparing oneself
-preparing interviewees
-opening the interview
-working on data-generation
-closing the interview
-analyzing the data
-publishing the analysis

*SOURCE

Organizational Development
Selected Readings
Pfeiffer and Jones, Editors
University Associates, 1977

NAME _____
PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PLAN
SCHOOL YEAR 19

WE BELIEVE ABOUT STUDENTS:

Students learn in a continuous progression, through a variety of methods and sensory perceptions involving different motivations and desires, by experiencing and participating in their immediate environment according to individual abilities, relationships and interests.

The teacher/student relationship should be based upon mutual respect involving trusting and open interaction and utilizing professional and humanistic acceptance.

WE BELIEVE ABOUT CURRICULUM:

The curriculum is the shared responsibility of the school and the community and should be developed jointly.

The curriculum should be able to meet the personal goals, needs and abilities of the individual.

The curriculum should be flexible and include a variety of activities.

Basic skills are an important element of the curriculum that will initiate lifelong learning and enable the student to function as a mature member of society.

WE BELIEVE ABOUT COOPERATIVE PLANNING:

- The parent, school, and community should share one another's human resources and physical facilities.

The parent, school, and community have mutual obligations including the support of common goals and values, open communication and cooperation.

THINGS I FEEL I DO WELL NOW:

MY PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PLANS FOR THE YEAR:

OBJECTIVES	EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS
A.	1.
	2.
B.	1.
	2.
C.	1.
	2.
D.	1.
	2.

I WOULD LIKE HELP IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL GROWTH COMMITTEE:

Name _____

INSERVICE OPTIONS - FALL 1980

Please indicate your inservice preference and list some goals you would like to achieve relative to that topic.

_____ 1. Discipline/Classroom Management
GOALS:

_____ 2. Individualization of Instruction
GOALS:

_____ 3. Identification and Effective Use of Learning Resources in the Community
GOALS:

_____ 4. Other (please specify area)

TOPIC:
GOALS:

TEACHER CORPS STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Individual Inservice Plan

NAME _____ DATE _____

INSERVICE TOPIC _____

SPECIFIC INSERVICE OBJECTIVES:

1.

2.

3.

4.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES

FEEDBACK: In order to improve the quality of the inservice activities, please evaluate the suggested activities and resources in terms of how helpful they were in achieving your inservice objectives.

Plan prepared by: _____

Date _____

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PERSONAL GROWTH PLANS FOR 19__-19__

Teacher Name _____ Interviewer _____

I. Teacher's written objectives were: [check (✓) one] Personal/Professional

Objective #

Objective #

Objective #

Objective #

Objective #

II. Objectives for 1980-81 were written: [circle (o) one number for each objective]

	Highly Specific		Moderately Specific			Not Specific	
Objective #	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Objective #	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Objective #	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Objective #	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Objective #	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

III. Teacher orally verbalized intent of objectives: [circle (o) one number for each objective]

	Excellently		Adequately			Poorly	
Objective #	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Objective #	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Objective #	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Objective #	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Objective #	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

IV. Progress on objectives, described orally, was: [circle (o) one number per objective]

	Excellent		Adequate			Poor	
Objective #	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Objective #	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Objective #	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Objective #	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Objective #	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

V. Teacher provided evidence for objectives completed. (Describe or attach)

Objective #

Objective #

Objective #